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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004251

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO POSTPONE CONTROVERSIAL CROSS-STRAIT
PEACE PROMOTION BILL IN RESPONSE TO RULING PARTY ATTACKS

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reasons: 1.4 (b/d).

1. (C) Summary: President Chen, under pressure over charges of corruption and cronyism, has shifted to full campaign mode, accusing the opposition of being co-opted by Beijing. During a television interview on October 17, Chen termed the People First Party (PFP) "Cross-Strait Peace Promotion Bill" the Taiwan edition of Beijing's "Anti-Secession Law" and called for the bill to be blocked by violent means if necessary. The controversial PFP bill specifically acknowledges the "1992 consensus" (referring in explanatory notes to differing interpretations of one China), which the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has long rejected, and establishes a new opposition-controlled legislative committee to manage cross-strait policy. In addition, Chen again accused PFP Chairman James Soong of meeting covertly in the U.S. early this year with Chen Yunlin, Director of the PRC Taiwan Affairs Office, a charge Soong vehemently denies. The PFP will likely postpone legislative action on the "Peace Promotion Bill" in hopes of preventing Chen from using it as a campaign issue. End Summary.

2. (U) In the past few days, DPP leaders have weighed in strongly against the "Cross-Strait Peace Promotion Bill," which specifically acknowledges the "1992 consensus" (referring in the draft law's explanatory notes to differing interpretations of one China), a key PRC demand that the DPP rejects. The bill would also place control of cross-strait relations in the hands of a new Legislative Yuan (LY) committee to be selected by political parties according to their representation in the LY. If implemented, control of cross-strait policy would be moved into the hands of the opposition Pan-Blue parties (Kuomintang (KMT) and PFP), which have the majority of seats in the LY. During a television interview on October 17, Chen said the bill, which he called the Taiwan edition of Beijing's Anti-Secession Law, must be blocked from passage at all costs, even if it takes a bloody battle in the LY. A day earlier Chen had charged: "It's a peace promotion law on the surface, but a surrender law in reality.... If it is passed, I'm afraid... two million Taiwanese would take to the streets to oppose it." DPP Chairman Su Tseng-chang charged that the "surrender law" would complete the PRC's three-step strategy to swallow Taiwan, the first two steps being the PRC's anti-secession law and the PRC's invitations to then Kuomintang (KMT) Chairman Lien Chan and PFP Chairman James Soong to visit. In addition to attacking the PFP bill, Chen Shui-bian has also attacked PFP Chairman James Soong for allegedly meeting covertly in the U.S. early this year with Chen Yunlin, Director of the PRC Taiwan Affairs Office, a charge Soong vehemently denies.

3. (C) Late on October 17, PFP Policy Director Vincent Chang (Hsien-yao) told the press that the PFP has decided to postpone LY action on its controversial "Cross-Strait Peace Promotion Bill" until late December to prevent Chen Shui-bian from using the bill as a campaign issue in the December 3 local elections. Earlier the same day, Soochow University Professor Emile Sheng had told AIT that he did not expect the KMT or PFP to push the controversial bill forward because it would provide the DPP an opportunity to shift the focus of media and public attention away from DPP corruption to the controversial issue of cross-strait policy. That would enable Chen and the DPP to seize the moral high ground and win votes from the opposition by focusing on the "China threat" and their efforts to protect Taiwan's interests. Prominent DPP legislator Lin Cho-shui recently suggested to AIT that it is uncertain if the cross-strait bill will actually pass because some KMT members might defect on a vote. Even if passed, Lin added, he was confident that the court would reject the bill as unconstitutional. Bearing out Lin's doubts, KMT legislator Su Chi told AIT last week that he and many other KMT legislators "do not support" the PFP cross-strait bill and would be quite happy to see it scuttled.

Comment

4. (C) Taiwan has entered a no-holds barred campaign season, and Chen Shui-bian is trying, as he has in past elections, to seize the initiative from the opposition by shifting media and public attention from DPP troubles by tarring the

opposition as Beijing fellow travelers. By postponing the Cross-Strait Peace Promotion Bill, the opposition parties hope to keep the focus on DPP scandals, corruption and cronyism, issues which have dominated the media in recent weeks and which threaten to cost the DPP dearly in the December 3 polls.

PAAL